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Seventy-second year

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Thursday, 13 July 2017, 11.05 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Wu Haitao	(China)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Michon
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Vaverka
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2017/563)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2017/563)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/563, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chambas.

Mr. Chambas: Despite laudable progress in democratic consolidation, the security situation in West Africa and the Sahel remains a cause for concern. The efforts of Member States of the region to deliver on development, improve infrastructure, create jobs and strengthen human security are being hampered by traditional and new drivers of conflict and insecurity.

Terrorism and violent extremism, in addition to the humanitarian crisis and threats to State integrity that they generate, have exacerbated traditional threats. These factors, combined with climate change, youth bulge and unemployment, and unchecked urbanization constitute veritable push factors underpinning the surge in irregular migration and human trafficking.

In the Sahel, persistent instability in Mali is spilling over into Burkina Faso and the Niger, with deadly attacks along border areas. The Liptako-Gourma region, linking Mali with Burkina Faso and the Niger, has experienced a significant expansion of violent extremist and terrorist activities in the past few months, including coordinated cross-border attacks against security posts and the ransacking of border settlements. Violent extremist groups targeted the northern provinces of Soum, Loroum and Yatenga in Burkina Faso and the western regions of Tillabéry and Tahoua in the Niger. Insecurity in those border areas has detrimental effects on the local economy.

The leaders of the three countries met in Niamey on 24 January under the auspices of the Liptako-Gourma authority and announced that they would be setting up a multinational stabilization force. That announcement came against the backdrop of ongoing discussions on the operationalization of the Group of Five States for the Sahel joint force, an initiative that encompasses all three Liptako-Gourma countries, as well as Chad and Mauritania, and which the Security Council welcomed through the adoption of resolution 2359 (2017) of 21 June. I would like to commend the countries of the Sahel for their continuous efforts to tackle security challenges at the national and regional levels. More support is needed to assist them in that challenging task.

The Lake Chad basin remains an equally challenging pole of insecurity. Despite the commendable efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force, which have substantially degraded Boko Haram's capabilities, shrunk its geographical reach and freed thousands of captives, recent attacks in Maiduguri and the Diffa region demonstrate that Boko Haram continues to pose a serious threat to the area. The mode and sophistication of those attacks have raised suspicions that the Boko Haram militants might have acquired reinforcements.

That situation continues to have devastating humanitarian consequences. Up to 5.2 million women, men and innocent boys and girls, many of whom have been displaced across the Lake Chad basin, are struggling for their very subsistence. The failure to provide basic services and viable livelihood opportunities for communities in affected areas risks derailing recent successes against Boko Haram. The Lake Chad Basin Commission regeneration plan offers a useful framework of cooperation to tackle the root causes of the worsening security environment.

In January, five field workers of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission were killed in an attack by unidentified armed elements near Kontcha, a region that was believed to be unaffected by the Boko Haram threat. While investigation into the matter is ongoing, the United Nations is working closely with the authorities of Cameroon and Nigeria to strengthen the security protocol for the resumption of border pillar construction in the area.

The threat of terrorist and violent extremist groups should not divert our attention from other pressing security threats, such as the intercommunal tensions witnessed in several countries. Clashes between farmers and herders across the region threaten to undermine peace, social cohesion and food security. The United Nations continues to advocate for a regional solution, while at the same time supporting the countries of the region in strengthening their national peace architecture.

West Africa and the Sahel also continue to be negatively affected by transnational organized crime and other cross-cutting threats to peace and security. Smugglers of drugs, human beings and weapons continue to criss-cross borders and establish new operational zones where the State has withdrawn or maintains only a tentative presence. Insecurity and lawlessness also stretch to the Gulf of Guinea, where criminal elements increasingly resort to piracy and hostage-taking.

In that context, let me stress that the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel presents a multidimensional approach to addressing the challenges of governance, security and resilience in the region. The implementation of the Strategy has registered notable progress. I chaired two meetings of the Steering Committee in May and June, which agreed on a clear division of responsibilities among United Nations entities for advocacy, strategic guidance and programmatic activities. While aiming to streamline efforts and reduce duplication among the various actors in the Sahel, the United Nations is also focusing on linking the Ministerial Coordination Platform of Sahel Strategies to the mechanisms of the United Nations Strategy. At the same time, the respective United Nations country teams are stepping up efforts to ensure tangible results at the country level.

In Burkina Faso and The Gambia, the United Nations continues to pursue the sustaining peace approach in support of the priorities of the respective Governments. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) is focusing on complementing ongoing development interventions by the United Nations country teams with targeted political interventions and institutional strengthening in politically sensitive areas such as justice and the rule of law, security sector reform and national reconciliation.

In the context of transitions from peacekeeping, I have already liaised with authorities in Côte d'Ivoire, and I plan to visit the country soon after today's briefing to the Security Council. My objective will be to work with Ivoirian stakeholders to sustain the country's strong recovery and to bolster peace and security efforts. In the light of the recent mutinies that have threatened the so far impressive recovery of the country, continuous support to deepen the reform of the defence and security sector, as well as national reconciliation and disarmament efforts, is imperative.

Constitutional review efforts in the subregion should be conducted in an inclusive, participatory and transparent manner to strengthen the foundations for democratic governance. I have continuously engaged with national stakeholders, civil society and diplomatic partners throughout the subregion, with a view to building consensus on this and other critical issues. I remain hopeful that countries in the region will accelerate progress towards fully implementing regional standards and respective national legislation on promoting the participation of women in decision-making, as well as overall respect for human rights, including the effective integration of youth in political and development processes.

In conclusion, let me assure the Council that UNOWAS will continue to work closely with all stakeholders and development partners in the region to help consolidate peace and stability in West Africa and the Sahel. I also reiterate my appeal to partners to maintain their engagement, including through financial support, to continue saving lives and to promote sustainable solutions.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Chambas for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for his thorough briefing. The events and trends in West Africa and the Sahel in the last period show the countries' commitment to sustainable peace and stability in the region. It is for good reason that we recently attended the closure of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, just as the Liberia mission is withdrawing from its ground operations.

Uruguay wishes to congratulate the Government and the people of The Gambia for the swearing in of President Adama Barrow in January, and hails his commitment and efforts to promote human rights and fundamental liberties. A few days ago, from this very Chamber, we also commended the people and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for the progress made in peacebuilding and conveyed our wishes for success in this new stage for the country.

Uruguay wishes to underscore the key importance of democratic principles in the region and the institutional stability that underpins such principles. In that regard, we particularly encourage the political leaders of Guinea Bissau to find a political solution to the crisis that is based on inclusive and constructive dialogue. We must not lose sight of the fact that it is the country's civilian population that bears the brunt of the consequences of protracted political stagnation.

As for security, we are concerned about the instability in the Lake Chad basin in the Sahel and crime in the Gulf of Guinea. We applaud regional countries' work in creating the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the Multinational Joint Task Force, as well as for their work in the West Africa Coast Initiative. Uruguay understands that regional countries face enormous security challenges and that many improvements are in order. Nonetheless, it is our view that the political will to join regional forces in pursuit of a common goal is noteworthy and is to be supported. We are encouraged by the progress in the fight against Boko Haram — in particular by the release of another 82 girls that had been abducted in Chibok. Their rehabilitation and social reintegration are essential. We also emphatically condemn the terrorist group's cowardly practice of using women and girls as suicide bombers.

The increased cooperation between the United Nations and the G-5 Sahel shows the commitment of the international community with that initiative and is an implicit recognition that the efforts of its member countries are on the right track. The Security Council itself was able to see, through its visits to missions ending in March 2016 and March 2017 in Bissau, Mali, Senegal and, this year, the Lake Chad basin countries, the enormous challenges that those countries and Governments face.

Our talk with the Special Representative in March was also quite useful, when he was starting to work at the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel after the approved merge and proactively addressed anticipated challenges. As the Special Representative aptly noted, the humanitarian situation in the region is worrisome and is exacerbated by the effects of climate change and insecurity — particularly in north-eastern Nigeria and in the Sahel region. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of international partners that provide support and we call on them to fully honour the pledges made in the Oslo Humanitarian Conference for Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region in February.

Finally, we note that the effective implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel will be key to supporting the long-term stability of the entire region.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas for his insightful briefing on the semi-annual report (S/2017/563) of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and recent developments in West Africa and the Sahel.

Since the beginning of the year, we have witnessed significant positive developments throughout the region. We highly commend the good offices and important role that Mr. Chambas and UNOWAS have recently played in conflict prevention in The Gambia, Burkina Faso and other regional countries. Meanwhile, the situation of various parts of the West African Sahel remains fragile due to the threats of Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations.

Taking those risks into account, the work of UNOWAS may become even more challenging after the closure of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in Liberia. We believe that the establishment and deployment of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) will positively contribute to maintaining stability in the region and helping UNOWAS to focus on conflict prevention, mediation and addressing cross-border security threats — including drug trafficking and piracy.

That can be only achieved through a more effective implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Addressing impunity and corruption; advancing structural reforms and security, justice and the rule of law; promoting human rights; increasing resilience; and engaging women and young people are equally important tasks within the Strategy,

which could also serve as a model for achieving stability and development in other African countries.

Kazakhstan is convinced that this subregional and comprehensive approach, which links security, development and humanitarian efforts, is the most efficient way to achieve peace and prosperity. The Security Council's recent mission to the Lake Chad basin once again reaffirmed the necessity of a sub-regional and coordinated approach that focusses on the root causes of the conflict and promoting development. It is therefore essential to enhance coherence and cooperation among UNOWAS, the Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations system as a whole, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the G-5 Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and national Governments. We also need to mobilize international financial institutions and donor countries to ensure long-term sustainable funding.

Finally, Kazakhstan will work with the members of the Council and key actors to find a solution to achieve a lasting peace in West Africa and the Sahel.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia thanks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for his briefing.

Bolivia is gratified by the leadership of countries of West Africa and the Sahel for their progress in implementing political, institutional and constitutional reforms. Côte d'Ivoire's path to peace is a case in point. The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire successfully completed its mandate on 30 June. We hail the commitment of the United Nations presence in Côte d'Ivoire to support the Government and ensure the maintenance of peace and the prosperity of the country and its people.

Bolivia highlights the work of the UNOWAS in the areas of good governance, security, human rights, gender issues, preventive diplomacy and good offices. We also know that we need the support of all members of the international community to carry out that work. In that regard, we value the support of the United Nations, the Security Council and regional and subregional bodies — such as the African Union and its Peace and Security Council, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and other associated groups.

Where good governance is concerned, we would like to highlight the progress that has been made in areas such as the peaceful resolution of a post-election crisis in the Gambia, the preparations for elections in Liberia and Sierra Leone and the initiative to promote development in the region. With regard to initiatives on gender issues undertaken by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, we support and encourage its work in promoting women's participation in political processes for peace and security.

We also commend the work that UNOWAS has been doing in the areas of conflict prevention, mediation and exercise of its good offices, as well as the constitutional reforms that have been implemented in Benin, Burkina Faso, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The links that UNOWAS has established between best practices, interactive dialogues, preventive diplomacy and strengthened coordination between the parties concerned have made it possible to launch initiatives for peace and security as well as national ownership and inclusivity, paving the way for consolidating peaceful solutions within a democratic framework.

Bolivia supports the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, as outlined in presidential statement S/PRST/2017/2, and we encourage the members of the G-5 Sahel to continue their work in coordination with the Secretary-General and the African Union, as laid down in resolution 2359 (2017). With regard to implementation of the strategy, we firmly believe that the current coalition of partners in the region, including the countries of the Sahel, regional organizations such as the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and ECOWAS, can contribute in ways that will make it possible to comprehensively tackle the region's political, economic, development and security challenges while also identifying the causes of instability there.

We are concerned about the complex of problems facing various countries in the region that are dealing with enormous challenges to their efforts to achieve peace and stability. Insecurity, transborder crime, human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants, and arms and drug trafficking are resulting in conflicts that have a negative effect on the region's population and development, on top of instability, terrible humanitarian situations and terrorism. Bolivia

condemns such actions, particularly terrorism, which can have no justification and represents a serious threat to international peace and security in all its forms and manifestations, wherever and by whomever it is committed. We call for the full implementation of resolution 2349 (2017), of 31 March, in the fight against terrorist groups, including Boko Haram and Da'esh.

Bolivia would also like to emphasize that part of the reason for the serious crisis that the Sahel is dealing with is the consequence of interventionist policies in North Africa. It is impossible to discuss a crisis of this magnitude in that part of the world without taking into account the interventionist efforts in Libya, which have resulted in arms and mercenaries pouring into the region. Bolivia firmly rejects such interventionist and interfering policies, which destabilize and undermine international peace and security.

Lastly, we urge the States of West Africa and the Sahel to continue with their stabilization process with strict regard for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all of their members.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his substantive and comprehensive report (S/2017/562). We agree with his assessment that the situation in the diverse and extensive region that he covers is a complex one. The terrorist threat remains acute, and eradicating it is one of the primary tasks on the regional agenda. Until then it will be impossible to achieve sustainable political stability or make substantive progress in solving the region's socioeconomic issues. We are concerned about the fact that various criminal groups, pirates and smugglers are working closely with terrorists, exploiting gaps in national and border security for their own illegal activity and essentially profiting from chaos, instability and the suffering of civilians.

All of that puts an additional burden on the already difficult humanitarian situation in West Africa and the Sahel. Unfortunately, for many ordinary people, the dry statistical data that is comprehensible to specialists familiar with the region does not convey the tragic scale of the realities in the region. It will take a long time and redoubled international assistance efforts to overcome the negative trends. We note the response of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and its work in forming a joint multinational rapid-reaction force together with Benin.

We welcome the establishment by the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel of a counter-terrorist force, endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2359 (2017), and we urge that it be deployed on the ground as soon as possible. We emphasize that efforts to improve security and stability should be carried out as part of a comprehensive approach, combining military counter-terrorism measures with efforts to strengthen State institutions, promote systemic economic and social development, spread a culture of respect for human rights and the rule of law and provide jobs for young people.

We greatly appreciate the steps that have been taken by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the specialized United Nations agencies to provide various types of assistance to countries in this part of Africa. It is important to ensure that, as before, these efforts are coordinated with regional associations such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Mano River Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Group of Five for the Sahel and others. We also think it important to ensure that we improve the effectiveness of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, whose potential has not yet been fully realized, and that the United Nations agencies in West Africa and the Sahara-Sahel region take that factor into consideration in coordinating their aid efforts with the Governments of the region.

In that regard, the views of the countries for which the Strategy was developed should be a priority. Above all, we should ensure that external assistance does not take the form of solutions imposed on African Governments by outsiders. We support the principled position that outside meddling is unacceptable. We all remember that the roots of the precipitous degradation of the situation in the region go back to 2011, when outside interference resulted in an operation aimed at regime change in Libya.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.